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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. In its letter dated 20 December 2010 (S/2910/661), the Security Council agreed to extend the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) until 31 December 2013, and requested me to report on the implementation of the revised mandate of UNOWA every six months. The present report covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2011.

2. The present report provides an overview of national, cross-cutting and cross-border developments in West Africa and outlines the activities undertaken by UNOWA in preventive diplomacy and awareness-raising with regard to emerging threats and challenges to regional peace and stability. It also presents the efforts of the Office to promote synergies at the subregional level in cooperation with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union.

II. Developments and trends in West Africa

A. Political trends

3. Since my previous report, developments in West Africa have presented both challenges and opportunities. In this regard, while election-related tensions and risks continued to be a source of concern in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia and Senegal, there were no major setbacks or crises in the region during the period under review. The Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa, which was endorsed during the regional conference organized by UNOWA in Praia, Cape Verde, from 18 to 20 May 2011, provided a new opportunity for subregional countries to reaffirm their commitment to the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. Furthermore, civil society organizations in West Africa played an active role in disseminating the recommendations from the Praia Declaration, thereby strengthening advocacy efforts for the respect of political rights and the holding of credible, transparent and peaceful elections.

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4. At the same time, the period under review witnessed an increase in cross-border and structural threats to the subregion's stability. The conflict in Libya and the post-presidential election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire continued to have a negative impact on the socio-economic, humanitarian and security situation of countries in the Sahel region and Mano River Union subregions, respectively. The rise in piracy attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, and the negative effects of drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in several countries, also contributed to increased insecurity in West Africa.

B. Economic, social and humanitarian trends

5. The economies of many countries in West Africa remained resilient in spite of the global financial crisis, owing in part to macroeconomic reform efforts. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), West Africa will register an overall economic growth rate of approximately 5 per cent in 2011. However, this overall rate could begin to decline as a result of increasing food insecurity and the prolongation of the international financial crisis.

6. The economic outlook for the region also continues to be closely linked to environmental conditions. As a result of delayed and below average rainfall during this year's rainy season, the 2011-2012 harvest is anticipated to be lower than last year, particularly in the Sahel countries. However, the 2011-2012 harvest will still be within the overall average of the last five years.

7. The deteriorating regional humanitarian situation resulting from the crises in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya had a serious impact on food security. In the Sahel, the massive influx of returning migrant workers, especially in Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Mali and Niger, deprived thousands of families of remittances while at the same time placing an economic burden on returnee communities. Reduced incomes, the higher price of basic food supplies and the projected decrease in food and pasture production during the 2011-2012 planting season have further exacerbated food insecurity in these countries. In this connection, during a summit of Heads of State held on 24 November in Niamey, the Presidents of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger called on the international community to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to combat food insecurity in these countries.

8. In the Mano River Union subregion, Ivorian refugees in neighbouring countries and internally displaced persons in Côte d'Ivoire also experienced food insecurity. In eastern Liberia, which hosts more than 85 per cent of Ivorian refugees, local communities are also feeling the impact of food insecurity. Despite this situation, the Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan for Liberia — which appeals for resources to assist a projected 150,000 refugees, as well as 25,000 returnees and third-country nationals — remains underfunded. The Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan for Côte d'Ivoire and its four neighbours (Benin, Ghana, Guinea and Togo) is also underfunded.

C. Security trends, including drug trafficking and organized crime

9. Weak rule of law systems combined with high levels of poverty in a number of West African countries continued to undermine regional efforts to combat organized crime and drug trafficking. Criminal organizations continue to use West Africa as a

transit point for the trafficking of cocaine and heroin, and for the production of synthetic drugs, including methamphetamine. On 11 October, authorities in Cape Verde announced the seizure of a consignment of over 1.5 tons of cocaine.

10. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has escalated both in frequency and intensity. The increase in pirate attacks in the region has led to higher maritime insurance costs and has caused a significant decline in customs and port revenues received by coastal countries. This trend has become especially acute off the coast of Benin, which lacks the capacity and the resources to adequately respond to this mounting threat. ECOWAS has been working closely with member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to develop regional initiatives to combat the increasing incidents of piracy.

11. Insecurity in the Sahel region continued to increase in the period under review owing to the return of armed elements from Libya to their home countries, especially Mali and Niger. There are concerns that these elements could stir up pre-existing political and security tensions in the receiving countries.

12. Participants of the conference on development and security in the Sahel, convened by Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger in Algiers on 7 and 8 September, and of the meeting of the ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff, held in Abuja on 4 and 5 October), expressed concern over the proliferation of a range of weapons, originating from Libya — from small arms to surface-to-air missiles — into its neighbouring countries. There are reports that some of these weapons may be falling into the hands of criminal and terrorist groups operating in the area. This matter was also discussed during the meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the armies of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, which took place on 21 November in Mali.

13. The porous nature of the borders in the Sahel region and the inaccessibility of the terrain combined with the limited national border security capacity make it difficult for countries in the region to tackle these security challenges alone. It is in this context that the Government of Niger has appealed for international assistance, particularly in the area of aerial surveillance, to secure its vast border with Libya.

14. The presence of armed combatants and mercenary groups along the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia continued to be a serious source of instability during the reporting period. Recurrent attacks on local populations in the border areas by these groups are fuelling a climate of fear and insecurity among the local populations. There are also concerns about arms caches in remote locations on both sides of the border that could be used by these groups to fuel instability in either country.

15. Terrorist groups continued to pose a significant threat to a number of countries in the region. During the reporting period, a series of attacks carried out by the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria claimed the lives of large numbers of civilians, including United Nations personnel, and resulted in injury to many others. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb was also active during the reporting period with a series of kidnappings of foreign nationals in the region. There is also growing concern in the region about possible linkages between Boko Haram and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb.

D. Trends on human rights and gender issues

16. During the reporting period, some countries in the subregion took further steps to ratify the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which is a positive indication of the growing respect for democracy, good governance and human rights. Both Niger and Guinea deposited their instruments of ratification, thus bringing the number of West African countries that have ratified this instrument to five. Encouraging developments in the area of impunity have also been noted with the conviction in August of three police officers in Burkina Faso responsible for the death of a student while in custody, and the launching of political dialogue and national reconciliation processes in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Togo. However, these steps aimed at addressing impunity need to be strengthened in order to consolidate democratic gains and sustainable peace. In addition, violence against women continued in a number of countries in the subregion.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. United Nations good offices and special assignments for conflict and crisis prevention

Guinea

17. During the period under review, the political situation in Guinea remained tense as a result of an assassination attempt against President Alpha Condé, a lack of a consensus on modalities for the organization of the legislative elections and limited progress in the implementation of the national reconciliation framework. My Special Representative remained engaged with the main political stakeholders, with a view to supporting national reconciliation efforts and promoting political inclusiveness, in close collaboration with the United Nations country team in Guinea, as well as with the African Union Special Envoy for Guinea, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the Guinea configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Group of Friends of Guinea.

18. On 19 July, a group of heavily armed assailants attacked the private residence of the President. The attack, which resulted in the arrest of several members of the Guinean armed forces, further exacerbated political tensions in the country. The attack was strongly condemned by national stakeholders, regional actors and the wider international community. My Special Representative travelled to Conakry after the attack to reiterate the United Nations condemnation of the attack, while calling again on all Guineans to refrain from any acts that could undermine the ongoing consolidation of democratic institutions.

19. Also in July, President Condé instructed the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization to engage all political parties with a view to seeking consensus on the preparations for the legislative elections. The issues dividing the political class included the revisions to the voters' list, the conduct of a new census, the reform of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) and representation by the political parties in the decentralized structures of CENI.

20. On 15 August, President Condé nominated the Grand Imam and the Archbishop of Conakry as co-Presidents of the Provisional Commission for National

Reconciliation. Since then, the co-Presidents have initiated countrywide consultations with a view to obtaining a preliminary consensus on the framework for national reconciliation in Guinea. On 15 December, my Special Representative participated in a session of the Provisional Commission in Conakry.

21. The announcement made by the President of CENI on 15 September that legislative elections will be held on 29 December further exacerbated tensions as the main opposition coalition, the coalition of political parties for the finalization of the transition, rejected the announced date and called on its members to participate in a demonstration on 27 September. This demonstration resulted in three deaths, several injuries and a number of arrests.

22. On 23 September, President Condé attended the meeting of the Guinea configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission in New York, during which the configuration adopted a statement of mutual commitment, which is a joint strategy to promote national reconciliation, reform the security sector, and promote efforts to create job opportunities for women and young people in Guinea. In my meeting with President Condé on the same day, I encouraged him to spare no efforts in resolving differences between the country's political actors with a view to ensuring the conduct of peaceful and credible legislative elections.

23. At the request of President Condé, on 26 September, the Prime Minister of Guinea, Mohamed Said Fofana, proposed the establishment of a framework for consultations for political parties to reach consensus on preparations for the legislative elections. On 29 September, the main opposition parties conditioned their participation in the consultations on the release of those arrested in connection with the demonstrations of 27 September and the suspension of all activities of CENI until consensus was reached on the modalities for the holding of the legislative elections.

24. In October and November, the facilitation team of the consultation framework, which is led by a representative of the National Transition Council, held a series of informal consultations. In support of this initiative, my Special Representative, together with the African Union Special Envoy for Guinea and in close cooperation with ECOWAS and international partners, encouraged the Government and the opposition parties to continue to engage in dialogue with a view to arriving at a consensus on the preparation for the elections.

25. On 15 November, President Condé convened a meeting with the leaders of the main opposition parties and the ruling party to discuss preparations for the elections. On 17 November and 6 December, the President granted amnesty to a total of 40 individuals who had been arrested and arraigned in connection with the 27 September demonstration. Notwithstanding these measures, the two main opposition coalitions on 29 November concluded that there was a lack of political will from the Government to facilitate dialogue with a view to organizing credible legislative polls.

Electoral processes in the subregion

Senegal

26. The Security Council will recall that, following the violent incidents that took place in that country last June, my Special Representative met with President Abdoulaye Wade to encourage him to do his utmost to create conditions conducive

to the holding of peaceful and transparent elections scheduled for 26 February 2012. He also expressed the wish for all stakeholders to avoid any action that could undermine democracy and the country's long-standing stability. Since that period, no violence has been reported and the situation remains calm. However, the June 23 Movement, which is comprised of several opposition political parties and some civil society organizations, continues to challenge the validity of the candidacy of President Wade who intends to run for the next elections. On 1 December, the opposition coalition Benno Siggil Senegal failed to reach consensus on a single candidate to represent the opposition in the elections.

Mali

27. On 11 October, my Special Representative met with President Amadou Toumani Touré to advocate for the conduct of transparent and peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections in April 2012, which would culminate in the smooth handover of power as Mali's democracy progresses. On 30 November, political parties and civil society groups joined in a demonstration to protest against a referendum expected to take place in April 2012, which proposes changes to the Constitution, including the creation of a Senate.

The Gambia

28. Presidential elections were conducted in the Gambia on 24 November. In the lead up to the elections, ECOWAS issued a statement indicating that it would not deploy an electoral observer mission on the basis that it had assessed the preparations and political environment not to be conducive for the conduct of transparent polls. On 25 November, the Independent Electoral Commission announced that incumbent President Yahya Jammeh had won his fourth consecutive term with 72 per cent of the votes. In a joint statement issued on 28 November, the opposition parties refuted the results. While agreeing that there were no major irregularities on election day, the observer team from the Commonwealth referred to the need for democratic reforms to strengthen governance in the country and the creation of a level playing field in the lead up to the elections in the country. The African Union Observer Mission was critical of the pre-election environment, in particular of the lack of equal access to public media. However, it found that there were no acts of intimidation on election day and concluded that, despite the shortcomings, the results were a true reflection of the will of the sovereign people of the Gambia. For its part, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation expressed satisfaction that the voting process was generally held under free, fair and transparent conditions.

The Sahel region

29. As referred to earlier in the present report, the recent conflict in Libya had a profound impact on neighbouring countries, especially in the Sahel region. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as at 27 November, some 200,000 migrants had crossed Libya's borders into neighbouring West African countries. In addition, IOM reports that there were approximately 100,000 returnees to Niger and 12,000 returnees to Mali, respectively, since the start of the Libyan conflict. In order to assess the political, humanitarian and socio-economic implications of this large-scale migration from Libya, my Special Representative visited Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger

in October, where he consulted with the Heads of State, senior Government officials, United Nations country teams and other international partners. All interlocutors stressed that the Libyan crisis had brought new security, humanitarian and socio-economic challenges. The Governments in countries with the largest numbers of returnees also indicated that they lack the capacity to address the increased security, humanitarian and socio-economic challenges associated with these returns.

30. In his discussions, my Special Representative expressed the willingness of the United Nations to develop a common approach for the Sahel region, building on the activities of the various United Nations country teams and taking into account the increased challenges confronting the subregion. It is against that background that I decided to dispatch an assessment mission to the region, led by the Department of Political Affairs and under the supervision of my Special Representative, with the participation of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, IOM, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, the Peacebuilding Support Office and UNOWA to develop recommendations for a United Nations system-wide strategy to respond to the needs of the subregion. Representatives of the African Union also agreed to participate in the mission, which visited Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria from 7 to 23 December. The main findings and recommendations of the assessment mission will be conveyed to the Council following completion of the Mission's work.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

31. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, chaired by my Special Representative, continued to make progress towards the implementation of the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002.

32. During the twenty-eighth session of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, held on 22 July in Abuja, Cameroon and Nigeria reiterated their determination to complete the cartographic demarcation of the boundary by the end of 2012, with the placement of boundary identification pillars to be pursued beyond 2012. Moreover, during a workshop organized by UNOWA from 8 to 31 August on the extraction of the watershed line in inaccessible areas using the digital elevation model, the parties agreed upon 99.4 km of boundary line, which covers the full distance of the section of the boundary referred to as the Alantika Mountains. The Office also supported the independent experts' team, mandated by the Mixed Commission to make a final determination of the boundary area of Mount Tosso, which the parties pledged to accept. Mount Tosso, which is only accessible by air, covers a distance of approximately 40 km of mountainous terrain. To date, of the estimated 1,950 km of boundary line, more than 1,700 km have been formally agreed upon by the parties.

33. Regarding confidence-building measures, four socio-economic development projects have been identified on the Cameroonian side of the border by a joint United Nations-Government team, which will be further developed in close cooperation with the United Nations country team and the donor community. A joint United Nations-Government mission, aimed at identifying similar socio-economic

development projects on the Nigerian side, was conducted in Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Adawama States of Nigeria from 4 to 16 December.

34. The thirteenth mission to observe the withdrawal and the transfer of authority in the Bakassi peninsula, within the context of the implementation of the Greentree Agreement of 12 June 2006, was conducted from 2 to 5 November. The mission noted considerable improvement in the general situation in the area, mainly owing to improved relations between the authorities and the population. The population nevertheless raised concerns regarding the increased security risk caused by piracy and banditry, which will require enhanced cross-border cooperation between the security forces of both countries. Furthermore, access to potable water and health care, particularly for women, is still lacking. Finally the mission underscored the need for citizenship documents to be issued to Bakassi residents.

35. The Follow-up Committee, tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Greentree Agreement, held its seventeenth meeting on 23 November in New York, under the chairmanship of my Special Representative. Cameroon and Nigeria reiterated their willingness to continue to consolidate peaceful cooperation and to work on improving socio-economic standards.

36. On 22 November, accompanied by my Special Representative, I met with the heads of delegation of Cameroon and Nigeria to the Mixed Commission and the Follow-up Committee on the Greentree Agreement. The Parties reaffirmed their willingness to resolve outstanding issues pertaining to the ruling of the International Court of Justice by the end of 2012 and to work on strengthening cooperative relations between the two countries. A campaign to raise funds required for the implementation of confidence-building measures between the two parties will be jointly undertaken by the United Nations country teams in both countries.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security, including piracy

Elections and stability

37. As a follow-up to the Regional Conference on Elections and Stability in West Africa, which took place in Praia, Cape Verde from 18 to 20 May 2011, UNOWA and the International Peace Institute organized a round table in New York on 26 September. The meeting, which was attended by representatives of the ECOWAS Commission, delegates from several United Nations Member States and election practitioners, discussed ways to improve the conduct of electoral processes and the provision of international electoral assistance in order to prevent election-related violence in West Africa.

38. During the reporting period, the West African Human Rights Defenders Network organized, with the support of UNOWA, a panel discussion on the role of civil society organizations in elections, on the margins of the fiftieth session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, held in Banjul on 25 October. The panel discussion resulted in the adoption of a road map for the implementation of the Praia Declaration by civil society organizations of the subregion. In collaboration with its partner organizations in the subregion, the Network is currently formulating an action plan to ensure a coherent approach among West African civil society organizations for the prevention of election-related instability.

Security sector reform

39. Pending the adoption by ECOWAS of a draft regional political framework and plan of action on security sector governance, UNOWA focused on supporting security sector reform efforts in Guinea. In response to President Condé's request for United Nations support in coordinating security sector reform activities in the country, I have decided to deploy a Senior Security Sector Reform Adviser to Guinea to work closely with the United Nations country team to support the security sector reform activities of the Government. The Adviser and his support team will operate under the authority of my Special Representative and in close coordination with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Guinea.

40. Since the launch of the National Security Sector Reform Steering Committee by President Condé on 20 June 2011, several mechanisms have been established to advance implementation of the national security sector reform policy. A strategic committee chaired by the Prime Minister of Guinea met several times between July and November to review the national and sectoral action plans, the census project for the armed forces and the retirement plan for some 4,300 military staff. In this regard, the biometric military census began on 5 October and was concluded on 28 November.

Drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime

41. UNOWA continued to advocate for national and international political support for the fight against drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in the subregion. In collaboration with the broader United Nations system, UNOWA and UNODC facilitated discussions on the renewal of the 2008/2011 ECOWAS Regional Action Plan, which ends in December. The plan focuses on measures to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa.

42. During the reporting period, my Special Representative initiated and consolidated partnerships with a number of institutions in support of the fight against transnational organized crime in West Africa. Pursuant to recommendations endorsed by the Group of Eight ministerial conference on transatlantic cocaine routes, held in Paris on 10 May, UNOWA and UNODC advocated for strengthened political and operational commitment from the international community during the visit of the Dublin Group to Dakar in September.

43. UNOWA, UNODC, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the International Criminal Police Organization continued to work together for the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) Programme. The first WACI Policy Committee meeting, which was chaired by my Special Representative in Dakar on 20 June, decided to include Guinea in the WACI Programme and to reinforce technical assistance in the four pilot countries, with a view to operationalizing the Transnational Organized Crime Units. While the Transnational Organized Crime Unit of Sierra Leone has successfully engaged in international investigations, the other Transnational Organized Crime Units have yet to demonstrate significant progress towards becoming fully operational.

44. The first meeting of the WACI Programme Advisory Committee, held on 27 October in Bissau, was chaired by UNODC and inaugurated by the Executive Director of UNODC, Yuri Fedotov, and my Special Representative. Delegations

from Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea participated for the first time and expressed their intention to become more actively engaged in the programme. The Programme Advisory Committee provided the opportunity for national delegations from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone to exchange experiences on the establishment of the Transnational Organized Crime Units, cooperation with judicial systems and enhancing counter-narcotics legislation in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Programme Advisory Committee reiterated its support for the establishment of a WACI Project Operational Committee in each pilot country.

Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

45. In response to a request by President Boni Yayi of Benin on 27 July for assistance from the international community in combating the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, my Special Representative travelled to Benin to engage the national authorities on this matter. I subsequently requested the deployment of an assessment mission to Benin and the Gulf of Guinea from 7 to 24 November to (a) assist the Government of Benin in the formulation of a national integrated programme to address the issues of drug trafficking and organized crime; (b) assess the scope of the threat of piracy in Benin; (c) determine the scope of the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea region; and (d) explore possible options for an effective United Nations response.

46. The mission, which was co-led by the Department of Political Affairs and UNODC, also comprised representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), UNDP, the United Nations Office in Central Africa (UNOCA) and UNOWA. The mission visited Benin from 7 to 17 November, Nigeria from 18 to 19 November, Gabon from 20 to 22 November and Angola from 23 to 24 November, where it met with a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including President Boni Yayi, Government officials, members of the diplomatic community and United Nations country team representatives. The mission also met with ECOWAS in Nigeria, ECCAS in Gabon and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in Angola. As requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2018 (2011), I intend to convey the findings and recommendations of the mission to the Council upon finalization of the mission's report.

C. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

47. During the reporting period, the Office continued to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights and gender mainstreaming by undertaking several initiatives. Within the framework of the regional action plan on the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), UNOWA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) organized regional training sessions on mediation from 19 to 23 July in Nigeria and from 3 to 7 October in Senegal, for 32 women leaders from the 15 ECOWAS member States and Mauritania. The women who took part in that training programme will form part of a pool from which expertise could be drawn for ongoing or future mediation initiatives in the West African region.

48. From 2 to 4 December, UNOWA, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ECOWAS, the African Union, the Mano River Union and the International Organization of La Francophonie, organized a regional conference on impunity, justice and human rights in West Africa, in Bamako. The conference was attended by Ministers of Justice, High Court Presidents and representatives of national reconciliation commissions, ECOWAS member States, Mauritania, the ECOWAS Court of Justice, the African Union, the Mano River Union, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and key civil society organizations. Participants adopted the Bamako Declaration and a strategic framework for strengthening the fight against impunity and the consolidation of peace, stability and development in West Africa. The Declaration contains a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening justice mechanisms and mechanisms for the promotion, defence and protection of human rights. It includes measures to fight organized crime, illicit trafficking, terrorism and piracy. It also calls for the significant strengthening of regional and international cooperation in implementing these recommendations.

D. Inter-institutional cooperation

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

49. In the light of the growing cross-border and cross-cutting challenges to peace and security in West Africa, UNOWA undertook a number of joint initiatives with United Nations peace missions, United Nations country teams in the subregion, OHCHR and the Peacebuilding Commission. Those initiatives included activities related to security, human rights and gender and socio-economic and humanitarian affairs.

50. At my request, UNOWA initiated activities to coordinate the actions of the United Nations presences in the subregion to support the development of a subregional strategy to address the threats of mercenaries, cross-border movements of weapons and armed groups and illicit trafficking, as well as their impact on forced population movement. In that context, my Special Representative dispatched a UNOWA team to Abidjan on 19 September to hold preliminary discussions with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) on ongoing joint UNOCI/United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) inter-mission cooperation measures and the development of a subregional security strategy. Subsequently, UNOWA submitted a set of proposals on the subregional strategy to the leadership of UNOCI, UNMIL, UNIPSIL and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau for their consideration and feedback.

51. On 14 October, my Special Representative convened the ninth meeting of the Dakar-based heads of regional United Nations agencies. Participants agreed to work together to develop a subregional strategy to address the threat of mercenaries, cross-border movements of weapons and armed groups and illicit trafficking, as well as their impact on forced population movements. Regarding the Sahel region, participants undertook to work together to harmonize their respective initiatives in a strategic and coordinated fashion in order to enhance United Nations efforts in the region. They also decided to establish a working group on the Sahel, under the chairmanship of my Special Representative, and composed also of representatives of

the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme (WFP).

52. The participation of my Special Representative in the meetings of the coordinators of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in West and Central Africa, of the UNICEF representatives in West and Central Africa and of the WFP country directors for West and Central Africa, held in Dakar on 4 October, 28 October and 6 December, respectively, provided another opportunity to strengthen United Nations inter-institutional cooperation on cross-cutting and cross-border challenges in the subregion.

53. On 28 November, my Special Representative convened the twenty-second high-level meeting of heads of United Nations peace missions in West Africa, in Dakar. My Special Representatives for Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia attended the meeting, which reviewed the situation in the subregion with a special focus on the recently concluded elections in Liberia and the upcoming legislative elections in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. My Special Representatives also undertook to increase their collaboration, especially in the development of a subregional security strategy to combat cross-border threats in the Mano River Union and with respect to ongoing United Nations regional activities, such as the WACI Programme.

54. My Special Representatives for West and Central Africa held their first consultation in Dakar in an effort to strengthen collaboration on issues related to peace and security in the two African subregions. They exchanged views on common cross-border threats in the two subregions, including insecurity in the Sahel Band — notably in the aftermath of the Libyan crisis — and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. They also underlined the importance of promoting a regional approach in conflict prevention and peacebuilding through the capacity-building of subregional organizations. In his capacity as Chair of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, Said Djinnit briefed his colleagues on progress in the implementation of the International Court of Justice ruling related to the peaceful delimitation of the border between the two countries. The Special Representatives agreed to meet on a regular basis and to facilitate a continuous exchange of information between UNOWA and UNOCA.

Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

55. In addition to joint activities mentioned earlier in the present report, UNOWA and ECOWAS undertook a number of joint initiatives with a view to further strengthening regional capacities, including in the field of conflict management and conflict prevention.

56. During the meeting of West African Chiefs of Security Institutions, which took place on 27 and 28 July in Abuja, the ECOWAS Commission announced that it had initiated a process towards the development of a subregional framework to effectively address terrorism. UNOWA participated in a governmental experts' meeting organized by ECOWAS in Bamako from 11 to 13 October to review the subregional counter-terrorism strategy. A second experts' meeting is expected to be held before the strategy is presented at the ECOWAS ministerial level for endorsement.

57. In response to the call of the ECOWAS mini-summit held in Abuja on 10 September, which was attended by the Heads of State and Government of

Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal, my Special Representative undertook a mission to Liberia from 13 to 15 September, together with the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Ambassador James Victor Gbeho. The joint ECOWAS/United Nations delegation met with national authorities, including President Sirleaf-Johnson, to discuss steps to overcome security challenges in the border areas between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire ahead of the 11 October Liberian presidential and parliamentary elections.

58. From 26 to 28 September, UNOWA, together with representatives of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, participated in a workshop organized by the African Union Border Programme in Addis Ababa. The event focused on enhancing cooperation between regional partners to prevent conflict through good management of boundaries, knowledge sharing and lessons learned and best practices from demarcation processes in Africa.

59. On 4 and 5 October, UNOWA participated in the twenty-ninth meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of the Chiefs of Defence Staff in Abuja. The meeting focused on the implementation of the ECOWAS mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security. Participants pledged their support for security sector reform processes and the establishment of codes of conduct for military and security forces in their respective countries. In addition, they decided to establish a special committee to review the draft maritime security strategy for the Gulf of Guinea prior to the next meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff. The meeting also discussed issues related to the organization and training of the ECOWAS Standby Force.

60. During the period under review, UNOWA and ECOWAS continued efforts to ensure that local actors are integrated into the overall peace and security architecture in West Africa. In collaboration with ECOWAS, UNOWA held a workshop from 17 to 19 October in Senegal, which identified challenges and priorities for peacebuilding in West Africa and discussed the need for mechanisms aimed at addressing these challenges.

61. With a view to strengthening the capacities of ECOWAS, UNOWA organized a workshop in Dakar on 19 and 20 October for the Abuja-based analysts of the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate, aimed at improving their skills in political analysis and reporting. A follow-on training workshop on humanitarian contingency planning and gender sensitive indicators will be organized in 2012 jointly with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UN-Women.

62. UNOWA participated in the Mano River Union Joint Security Committee meeting, held in Conakry from 28 to 30 November. During the meeting, the fifteenth Mano River Union Protocol on Peace and Security was updated to include an implementation framework, aimed at facilitating joint training, patrolling, and coordination and exchange of security information among Member States. The revised protocol also broadened the scope of the mandate of the Mano River Union to include additional emerging security threats, such as piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. On 30 November, my Special Representative travelled to Guinea to address the opening session of the Mano River Union ministerial consultative meeting attended by ministers from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, at which the revised fifteenth Mano River Union Protocol on Peace and Security was endorsed. On that occasion, he pledged United Nations support to ongoing efforts aimed at

revitalizing the Mano River Union, including through the 2011-2013 UNOWA/ Mano River Union Strategic Framework of Cooperation for Peace and Security.

IV. Observations and recommendations

63. Despite the fragile security situation in a number of countries, there was a decline in open conflict in West Africa during the reporting period. In this regard, I am pleased to note that the actions and activities of UNOWA and its partners in the United Nations system contributed positively to this situation. Nonetheless, the subregion still faces an increase in cross-cutting and cross-border challenges which could, if left unaddressed, undermine regional stability and, ultimately, reverse the peace consolidation gains made over the past few years. UNOWA will continue to work closely with its partners, including those in the United Nations system, to support subregional initiatives aimed at countering these threats and challenges.

64. I commend the Government of Guinea for its efforts to stabilize and consolidate peace in that country. The timely holding of free, fair and peaceful legislative elections will further contribute to reinforcing the democratization process in Guinea. It is therefore paramount that the ruling and opposition parties demonstrate flexibility and goodwill to reach consensus on modalities for the holding of the legislative elections and for the building of public confidence in electoral mechanisms and institutions.

65. A successful national reconciliation process will also constitute an important step towards the consolidation of stability in the country. In that respect, I encourage the Government to foster national reconciliation. The United Nations remains fully committed to supporting the Government of Guinea in these endeavours.

66. I am pleased with the progress made by the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, which is due in large part to the commitment by the two countries to complete the implementation of the 2002 ruling of the International Court of Justice and to strengthen bilateral ties. I urge the parties to respect the schedule of meetings that they have set for themselves and to continue to work towards the provision of the timely technical, legal and financial support required in order to make progress in the delineation of the boundary line. I also encourage the parties to establish a new management structure to assist in the coordination and supervision of the demarcation work. I wish to reaffirm the unwavering support of the United Nations for the efforts of the two countries to overcome all outstanding issues and to complete the delineation of the boundary by the end of 2012.

67. The spirit of teamwork demonstrated by national partners and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in identifying confidence-building measures along the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary line is very encouraging. In this regard, I urge the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to continue their engagement with the populations affected by the demarcation process with a view to further enhancing relations.

68. Regional efforts to prevent election-related violence, which has contributed to instability in several countries in the subregion, must continue. In this regard, I am encouraged by the various initiatives taken by West African stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to implement the recommendations of the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa. It will be especially important

that Governments in the region make every effort to reduce political, ethnic and social tensions and vigorously pursue policies of inclusiveness and national reconciliation. UNOWA will continue to support national and regional efforts to achieve those objectives.

69. In the coming months, UNOWA will reinforce its collaborative relationship with ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, regional United Nations country teams and other partners in the promotion and protection of human rights, the fight against impunity and the mainstreaming of human rights and gender into electoral and governance processes. In that regard, I call on Member States to implement the Praia Declaration and the Bamako Declaration and strategic framework.

70. In the months ahead, the fallout from the Libyan crisis is likely to continue to challenge stability in the Sahel region, which will require strengthened cooperation among the Governments of the region. My Special Representative and the rest of the United Nations system will remain active in supporting regional cooperation efforts aimed at addressing the political, security, humanitarian and development needs of the people in the region. Furthermore, in the light of the possible linkages between terrorist groups active in West Africa and the influx of weapons from Libya into neighbouring countries, I encourage the countries of the subregion to swiftly adopt and implement the draft ECOWAS counter-terrorism strategy and implementation plan. I also call on Member States and international and regional organizations to generously respond to appeals for support from Sahel countries which need capacity-building and funds with which to counter the destabilization threats.

71. Transnational organized crime, including illicit drug trafficking, remains another major threat to peace and security in West Africa. I therefore encourage the countries of the subregion to continue to pursue measures to combat this scourge through the implementation of ongoing programmes, in particular the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan against organized crime and illicit drug trafficking, and the West Africa Coast Initiative. I call on international partners to provide financial support for these programmes.

72. The rise of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea will require a concerted effort by countries and organizations of the region, with logistical, diplomatic, financial and technical support from the international community.

73. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of West African countries, the African Union, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union, as well as other subregional and regional institutions, for working closely with UNOWA. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the various entities within the United Nations system active in West Africa, including the heads of United Nations peace operations, regional offices, country teams and other relevant entities, for their support and cooperation with UNOWA. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Said Djinnit, the staff of UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their tireless efforts to advance peace and security in West Africa.